

Mare Island Technology Academy (MIT Academy), The New 3R's: Rigor, Results, and Rewards

The New 3R's: Rigor, Results, and Rewards will offer incentive bonuses for increasing student achievement, taking on new leadership roles, and retention.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

MIT Academy operates two independent charter schools, one middle, and one high school that serve 780 students in Vallejo, California. The majority of the students are minorities. Free/reduced meal eligibility in the area school district's elementary schools in 2006-07 was 51.2 percent.

MIT students' scores on the California Standards Tests have improved annually, yet a sample of 2006 results shows the need for improvement for all students, particularly African Americans. Passing rates on the California High School Exit Exam are also low; in grade 10, 71 percent passed English and 64 percent passed math (63 and 51%, respectively, for African Americans). On the State School Academic Performance Indicator, where the "proficient" level score is 800, MIT Academy High School scored 664 and the middle school scored 692.

The schools have 32 teachers (all met the highly qualified subject matter requirements in 2007-08). Thirty-one percent of faculty are in their first 4 years of teaching; 26 percent are in their first 2 years. The administrative duties are shared by three individuals (1.5 FTE) with 6 or fewer years of administrative experience.

Background

The New 3R's: Rigor, Results, and Rewards is a new program. In 2005, MIT Academy High School was chosen by the International Center for Leadership in Education (ICLE) and the Gates Foundation to work over 5 years to become a "national model high school." Concurrently, the MIT board established a compensation/incentive task force to explore an award incentive program for staff for 2007-08. The task force recommended aligning the incentive program with the ICLE goals. The academy then expanded the program to address areas in the Teacher Incentive Fund, specifically, rewarding teachers and principals for increased student achievement and offering incentives to teachers to take on leadership roles.

Incentives

MIT Academy will offer an average of \$158,725 per year in incentive bonuses, based on MIT Academy's data indicators and student improvement goals for eight of ICLE/Gates criteria as summarized in California State test scores. Fifty-four percent of the funds may be awarded annually to individual teachers, all principals and teachers at the school meeting the goal, or all teachers and principals in the system. The program also includes a performance-based compensation system for retaining successful teachers and principals

LOCATION(S)	Vallejo, California
AWARD DATE	November 2006
DURATION	5 years
PARTNERS	N/A

(9% of award) and for supporting teachers who assume leadership roles. Staff receive a \$2,000 bonus during their fourth year. Since tenure does not exist, only high-performing staff will reach this goal. Approximately 37 percent of funds will be awarded twice a year to teachers assuming additional responsibilities and leadership roles. The program also includes professional development.

Evaluation

There are seven measures of student achievement used as indicators of teacher and principal effectiveness: multiple test scores constitute five of the measures, performance in leadership roles the sixth, and longevity for high-performing staff the seventh. Also, MIT will use 6-week interim student learning evaluations, observations, and ongoing meetings to evaluate effectiveness. Teacher leaders will get semester contracts, renewable upon performance for the second semester.

Resources

MIT will supply an escalating cost-sharing match and provide staff as in-kind contributions. MIT will also sustain the incentive with full self-funding through guaranteed funding base from California, as well as pledged “soft money.” Funds will be dispersed as noted above.

Data Systems

MIT Academy has an effective data management system in place, though adjustments need to be made. Included are specific plans to address these changes.

Year 2 Activities

In Year 2, the TIF Committee reviewed the current award structure for both student achievement and teacher retention. As such, student achievement objectives were modified to encompass a greater number of eligible teachers. Specifically, the maximum amounts for achieving target objectives for student achievement

have been increased. Additionally, incentives based on student achievement now encompass any subject-specific progressive increases in California Standards Test results and how the school fares in relationship to peer schools within the city.

Concentrated efforts made toward improving the middle school math program has resulted in positive improvements in ALL middle school math courses. Changes to the high school English/Language Arts program have led to significant improvements in the freshman and sophomore levels.

Responding to feedback regarding teacher retention, MIT Academy now uses a graduated scale to award effective teachers incrementally as they remain with the school from their first year of service. The scale culminates in a maximum amount after the fourth year of service, with a final nominal recognition award after a teacher's fifth year.

Outlook for Year 3

In Year 3, the TIF Committee will continue to meet to openly represent the ideas of the 3R's, Rigor, Results and Rewards, to the new staff. We will continue to use data to drive any proposed changes to the program and procedures and the evaluation of the whole program's efficacy. One of the major changes to MIT Academy's 3R's will be the transparency of the communication of teacher leadership roles and student achievement goals. This information will be available within the school's intranet site, making the intents of the program better known not only within the school but also to the community as a whole. Additionally, MIT Academy expects to renew its commitment to the original charter ideas of Project-Based Learning and Technology-infused curriculum. These activities should perpetuate the momentum of Year 2, with continued focus on the New 3Rs.